United Nations A/73/PV.3

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-third session

3rd plenary meeting
Friday, 21 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Tran Dai Quang, President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

The President: Before we proceed to the item on our agenda, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, His Excellency Mr. Tran Dai Quang, who passed away earlier today.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of Viet Nam to convey our condolences to the President's family and to the Government and the people of Viet Nam.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Tran Dai Quang, President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: A formal tribute in the General Assembly will be convened at a later date to be announced.

I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): We are deeply saddened by the sudden passing away of our President, Tran Dai Quang. It is a great loss for our nation and for the people of Viet Nam, as well as for our friends around the world.

On behalf of the Permanent Mission and the Government of Viet Nam, I would to express our deepest and most sincere gratitude for the sympathy and condolences expressed for our President. Such thoughtfulness and friendships are truly appreciated.

Agenda item 7

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

First report of the General Committee (A/73/250)

The President: May I invite the General Assembly to direct its attention to section I of the report of the Committee. In that section, the General Committee took note of the information contained in paragraph 2.

May I request the General Assembly to now direct its attention to section II, entitled "Organization of the session", which contains a number of recommendations concerning the General Committee, the rationalization of work, the closing date of the session, the schedule of meetings, the general debate, the conduct of the meetings, et cetera.

With regard to paragraph 22, it is proposed that the Fifth Committee complete its work by Friday, 14 December 2018. May I take it that the General Assembly approves that the Fifth Committee will complete its work by Friday, 14 December 2018?

It was so decided.

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The President: In paragraph 33, the General Committee draws to the attention of the Assembly that the general debate will begin on Tuesday, 25 September, and recommends that it continue on Saturday, 29 September 2018.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the information contained in paragraph 33 and approves the recommendation that the general debate continue on Saturday, 29 September 2018?

It was so decided.

The President: All other recommendations in section II of the report of the Committee concern established practice. Therefore, rather than going through them one by one, I believe it would be beneficial to address all of those organizational matters concerning the General Assembly as a whole. Are there any comments on that approach?

There being none, we shall proceed accordingly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of all of the information and to approve all of the recommendations of the General Committee contained in section II of the report?

It was so decided.

The President: Having just adopted the recommendation in paragraph 28 on waiving the requirements of rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly for declaring a meeting open, I should like to encourage delegations to be present in the meeting rooms at the scheduled times in order to promote punctuality and efficiency in the Assembly's proceedings. I should also like to refer to the information contained in paragraph 70 on the timely submission of draft proposals for review of their programme budget implications.

I now invite Members to turn their attention to section III, which deals with the adoption of the agenda. The question of the allocation of items will be dealt with subsequently in section IV.

In section III, the General Committee took note of the information contained in paragraphs 88 to 90. In paragraph 91, in connection with sub-item (k) of item 20 of the draft agenda, entitled "The role of the international community in the prevention of the radiation threat in Central Asia", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading A, "Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences".

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 92, in connection with item 30 of the draft agenda, entitled "Space as a driver of sustainable development", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading A.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 93, in connection with item 36 of the draft agenda, entitled "Complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading B, "Maintenance of international peace and security".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 94, in connection with item 42 of the draft agenda, entitled "Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading B, on the understanding that there would be no consideration of the item by the General Assembly.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 95, in connection with item 64 of the draft agenda, entitled "Question of the Malagasy islands of Glorieuses, Juan de Nova, Europa and Bassas da India", the General Committee decided to recommend that consideration of that item be deferred to the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly and that the item be included in the provisional agenda of that session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 96, in connection with item 68 of the draft agenda, entitled "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine", the General Committee decided, by a recorded vote, to recommend its inclusion under heading B.

In accordance with rule 23 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, in the event that there is a debate on the inclusion of an item in the agenda when that item has been recommended for inclusion by the General Committee, such debate shall be limited to three speakers in favour of, and three against, the inclusion.

Mr. Musikhin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): During the meeting of the General Committee on 19 September, we expressed our negative view on the inclusion of the item on the so-called temporarily occupied territories in Ukraine on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. It is lamentable that the Committee, at the request of the Ukrainian delegation, was forced to vote, so as to deviate from the consensus basis for its work. We do not think that a healthy trend.

We would like to inform the General Assembly of our principled opposition to the recommendation of the General Committee, adopted, I remind members, in the absence of consensus, on including this item on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. We are of the view that this latest Ukrainian escapade, founded on something that Kyiv has devised — an arbitrary interpretation of events — is designed to sow discord within the Assembly and create a negative atmosphere from the very beginning of the new session.

We want to draw the particular attention of States to the fact that this destructive act by the Ukrainian delegation undermines the only internationally recognized format for overcoming the crisis in Ukraine, that is, the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, as approved by Security Council resolution 2202 (2015). That resolution was adopted unanimously owing to the fact that it contains very precise and correct wording that reflects the real situation on the ground. As should be well understood, the expression "the temporarily occupied territories" is not included in that text, and neither is it included in the Council's presidential statement in support of the Minsk agreements, adopted 6 June 2018 (S/PRST/2018/12).

Our delegation, more than any other, wants the conflict on the territory of our near neighbour to be resolved through peaceful means, in complete consistency with the Minsk agreements as approved by the Security Council. Unfortunately, the latest anti-Russian approach of Ukraine within United Nations forums is evidence of the fact that Kyiv's intentions are the opposite, namely, to exacerbate internal conflict as much as possible and hope to secure international assistance in its fight against its own population. The country's authorities are using any opportunity to draw the attention of the international community away from their own role in the hostilities in Donetsk and Luhansk and pretend to be the victim of circumstances, in an attempt to avert responsibility for the situation there.

We are convinced that this item, as proposed for the agenda of the General Assembly, will not help to alleviate the suffering of the populations in Donetsk and Luhansk. Quite the contrary, it will only exacerbate the already lamentable status of the direct dialogue of those regions with Kyiv. If the General Assembly follows the lead of the Ukrainian delegation, it will become Kyiv's accomplice with regard to the non-implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Member States are certainly aware of the dangerous trend and the attempts by some countries to resolve their internal issues through the United Nations, especially in the context of approaching domestic elections. The question is therefore: should the most representative body in the world become involved with the ambitions of those various States?

In conclusion, we believe that the very partisan Ukrainian initiative is designed to create confrontation. We therefore do not agree with the inclusion of this item on the agenda, as proposed by the Ukrainians, or with the recommendation of the General Committee, which was not consensus-based. We request that a vote be taken and encourage all delegations to vote against.

The President: Before proceeding further, I should again like to draw the attention of members to rule 23 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "Debate on the inclusion of an item in the agenda, when that item has been recommended for inclusion by the General Committee, shall be limited to three speakers in favour of, and three against, the inclusion. The President may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule."

Ms. Argüello González (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Nicaragua reiterates its congratulations,

support and best wishes for the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

With regard to the topic before us, the only internationally recognized format for resolving the crisis in Ukraine is the Minsk agreements, endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2202 (2015), in which there is no mention at all of the term, "occupied territory". The inclusion of that topic on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly is therefore highly politicized and distances us from the consensus achieved. Accordingly, my delegation, through rule 23 of the rules of procedure, supports Russia's proposal and calls for a recorded vote on the inclusion of the topic of the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in the agenda, and we call on other Member States to vote against its inclusion.

Mr. Al Arsan (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Madam President, on behalf of my country, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We are proud that you have been elected to that position. You can rely on us to provide the support and cooperation needed to ensure respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

With regard to the request by Ukraine for the inclusion of a additional item on the provisional agenda, circulated in document A/73/193, my country's delegation sees it as a unilateral and politicized step that would undermine our efforts to ensure consensus on the items on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

My delegation has noted for some time that certain delegations request the inclusion of items on the agenda of the General Assembly to exercise political pressure in a manner that undermines the main purposes and principles of the United Nations, thereby using this organ as a means of polarization and spreading discord, instead of making it a source of unanimity and consensus to achieve peace, security and development for all without exception.

Our legal understanding of this issue is based on the clear fact that the situation in those territories is subject to the provisions of the Minsk agreements, which were agreed upon by the United Nations through Security Council resolution 2202 (2015), with all its annexes. The agreements were also supported by the Council's presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12.

Given that legal basis, my delegation believes that the implementation of the Minsk agreements and Security Council resolution 2202 (2015) requires genuine political will on the part of all parties to work together towards restoring security and stability in Ukraine and the region. We therefore view the request for inclusion submitted by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine as a deplorable attempt to obstruct the implementation of those agreements and undermine international efforts to settle the conflict.

Inserting a term like the "temporarily occupied territories" will not change the fact that the issue falls under the purview of the Security Council pursuant to its resolution 2202 (2015), and that it requires the implementation of paragraph 1 of Article 12 of the Charter, which states:

> "While the Security Council is exercising in respect of any dispute or situation the functions assigned to it in the present Charter, the General Assembly shall not make any recommendation with regard to that dispute or situation unless the Security Council so requests."

In conclusion, my country's delegation calls on Member States to vote against the inclusion of the supplementary item before us on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly. Voting against would reflect our respect for the Charter and international treaties, as well as our commitment to the rules of procedure. It would also demonstrate that we are keen to prevent the General Assembly from becoming involved in politicized issues, especially if such involvement does not serve to settle disputes or achieve security and stability in that part of the world.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): As this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor during a plenary meeting of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, I would like to warmly congratulate you, Madam President, on your election. Let me assure you of our full support for the able manner in which you have already begun to conduct the work of the Assembly.

Concerning the substance of the issue of the current debate, I would like to state the following. As you already informed representatives, Madam President, the General Committee, at its first meeting, under your wise chairmanship and guidance, recommended to the General Assembly the inclusion in the agenda of the seventy-third session of a new item entitled "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of

Ukraine". I would like to highlight that the Committee's decision was adopted by a recorded vote, the result of which became self-explanatory. An absolute minority — only two Member States — voted against it, thereby attempting to impede the General Assembly's special authority and particular responsibility to consider any issue brought to it by a United Nations Member. The statement delivered by the Russian representative that we just heard provides ample testimony of Russia's total disrespect and disregard — I would say — for the decision already taken by the General Committee. I am convinced — as has been stated by the United Nations membership on numerous occasions — that, as the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the Organization, the General Assembly is imbued by the Charter of the United Nations with the authority to discuss any questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Everyone is well aware that, following the military aggression in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in Ukraine in 2014, the General Assembly, by its resolution 68/262, entitled "Territorial integrity of Ukraine", affirmed its commitment to the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. I would also draw the attention of the Russian representative to the fact that, since then, in two subsequent resolutions — in 2016 (resolution 71/205) and 2017 (resolution 72/190) — the General Assembly condemned the ongoing temporary occupation of parts of the territory of Ukraine — a fact that the Russian representative carefully avoided in his earlier statement.

What I want to underline is that the foreign occupation in Ukraine, which persists to this day, is not a new topic for the General Assembly, as some Member States would manipulatively try to convince the international community to believe. At the same time, as of today, the General Assembly does not have on its agenda an item under which it would consider the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine comprehensively or in all its complexity, encompassing the political, security, humanitarian, social, human rights, gender and other dimensions. Introducing a new agenda item is by and large a procedural step aimed at creating a framework and streamlining the consideration of the issue of foreign occupation in Ukraine in the General Assembly in all its aspects.

Having on its agenda a really pressing issue, unlike many static ones that are already there, will serve the purpose of revitalizing the Assembly. The consideration of this international conflict by the General Assembly will have a positive impact on the search for peace, as it will present a unique opportunity for the whole international community, along with dedicated stakeholders, to strengthen existing peace initiatives. It will also make it possible to maintain constant awareness of the conflict on the part of the entire United Nations membership. Close attention to this issue, with consideration by the General Assembly, has to be consistently maintained until the territorial integrity of Ukraine is fully restored within its internationally recognized borders.

In conclusion, since the issue of the implementation of the Minsk agreements was raised by the Russian Federation, I would like to reiterate that Ukraine remains committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It is necessary to underline, nevertheless, that the logic of the Minsk agreements envisages the immediate implementation of the initial security provisions, namely, a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons, which the occupying Power has not done. Foreign troops are still on the territory of Donbas in Ukraine. The occupying Power remains unwilling to stop fuelling the conflict, considering escalation in Donbas as an important element of its overall effort to destabilize Ukraine.

I call upon all Member States to support the inclusion of the supplementary item on the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, and accordingly to vote yes. Members' support will become a valuable contribution to the peaceful settlement of the conflict in the very heart of Europe and to putting an end to the suffering of the people of Ukraine.

Mr. Moraru (Republic of Moldova): As this is the first time I take the floor since your election to the presidency of the General Assembly, I should like to extend to you, Madam President, the heartfelt congratulations of the Moldovan delegation.

My delegation supports the inclusion on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly of a new item entitled "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine". The issue of whether to include this item on the agenda has already

been considered by the General Committee. That Committee took a very clear decision to recommend its inclusion on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly.

Today we are witnessing a situation where some delegations are attempting to force a position on the General Assembly, a position that did not enjoy the support of the overwhelming majority of the General Committee. It is the General Assembly's direct responsibility to respect the rights of all Member States to put forward matters of fundamental concern for transparent deliberation by the Assembly in plenary meeting. It is indeed a matter of high principle for the General Assembly to continue to uphold the rights of its members under the Charter of the United Nations.

In view of what I have just said, my delegation calls on all Member States to vote in favour of the inclusion of the item "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine" on the agenda of the General Assembly, as recommended by the General Committee.

Ms. Bird (Australia): As this is the first time that I take the floor, Madam President, let me add my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly and pledge my delegation's full support to you in your important role.

Australia supports the proposal to include the supplementary item "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine" on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. The issues identified in the explanatory memorandum accompanying the request go to the core of the purposes, principles and mandate of the United Nations and its Charter. Indeed, a number of General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 68/262, have called on States, international organizations and specialized agencies to take action with respect to some of the issues pertinent to the situation in Ukraine.

In the four and a half years since the Assembly adopted resolution 68/262, fighting in Ukraine has killed over 10,000 people, including thousands of civilians, and wounded many more. Fighting continues to endanger civilians in eastern Ukraine and to destabilize the wider region. The conflict has already displaced at least 1.6 million people, placing a colossal burden on both Ukraine and its neighbours.

In Australia's view, it is critical that these matters be considered by the General Assembly, the organ with universal membership and a comprehensive mandate, in a holistic fashion. We therefore urge the members of the General Assembly to vote in favour of the inclusion of this item on the Assembly's agenda for the seventy-third session.

The President: The Assembly shall now consider the question of the inclusion of the item in question in the agenda of the current session.

A recorded vote was requested on the recommendation by the General Committee to include item 68 of the draft agenda, entitled "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

Before giving the floor for explanations of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Lewicki (Poland): At the outset, let me join other delegations in congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of this body. Allow me to assure you of Poland's full trust in your able stewardship of the work of the General Assembly.

Poland will vote in favour of the proposal by Ukraine to include the item entitled "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine" on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. By that vote, we want to reaffirm our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and its territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We want to defend the very basic principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. And we also wish to further enhance the right of Ukraine to have the issue of foreign aggression against its territory discussed in the most representative United Nations organ, namely, the General Assembly.

The illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, which is a clear violation of international law, remains a direct challenge to international security and the stability of the region. We therefore support every international effort to resolve the issue and restore the shattered order.

Mr. Pildegovičs (Latvia): I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the position of President of the General Assembly. I would like to assure you of Latvia's full support in your endeavours.

I have the honour to speak now on behalf of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. We reaffirm our strong support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders. This issue must remain high on the international agenda.

We will remain vocal and firm in our irreversible policy not to recognize the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. We consider it a continuing, serious breach of the international order. We are also deeply concerned about human rights violations and abuses in Crimea, which should be thoroughly investigated. International human rights observers must be granted full, free and unhindered access to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.

We reiterate that the full implementation of the Minsk agreements remains our unchanged benchmark. We also reaffirm our full support for the endeavours of the Normandy format, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Trilateral Contact Group aimed at a sustainable and peaceful resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The General Committee, by its vote on 19 September, decided to recommend the inclusion of the item entitled "Situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine" on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania will vote in favour of the inclusion of this agenda item, and we call on other Member States to do likewise.

Mr. Petersen (Denmark): Let me join others in welcoming you, Madam, as President of the new General Assembly session and assuring you of the Danish delegation's full support.

Denmark stresses the continued importance of resolution 68/262, on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and fully supports the proposal to include the item entitled "Situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine" on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

More than four years ago, Russia set aside fundamental principles of international co-existence in its actions in Ukraine. The attempt to hinder the Ukrainian people's free choice and their wish to shape their own future remains unacceptable and poses a challenge to regional and international peace. The aggression against Ukraine and the ongoing occupation of parts of its territory remain deeply unacceptable. The suffering of people in Ukraine persists, and the continued increase in the number of casualties remains of great concern. The human rights situation in the temporarily occupied territories has deteriorated as violations and abuses of human rights continue to take place.

The attention given by the General Assembly to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine is not only important for the people of Ukraine but also is critical for the international community. We must protect and maintain international law, and we must therefore continue to discuss issues of the violations of international law, if we wish to maintain international peace and security.

Denmark recalls its unwavering support for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, and we continue to condemn the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea.

Ms. Agladze (Georgia): I join others in congratulating you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly, and I assure you of our full support.

With regard to the inclusion on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session of the new item entitled "Situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine", I wish to highlight the following.

At its meeting held on 19 September, the General Committee took a very clear decision, by an overwhelming majority, to include the item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. It is the General Assembly's well-established custom to respect the right of all Member States to introduce issues of concern for deliberation in plenary meeting.

The occupation of Ukrainian territories is an important issue with grave implications for regional and international peace and must be discussed by the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Today, however, we face an attempt to impose upon the General Assembly a position that was not supported by the General Committee, which undermines the credibility of the General Committee.

In view of that we strongly support the inclusion of the agenda item entitled "Situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine", and we urge all

delegations to vote in favour of the inclusion of the item as recommended by the General Committee in paragraph 96 of its report.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to join other delegations in congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly and to assure you of my delegation's full support.

The General Assembly is the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Member States have the right to submit for discussion in the Assembly any questions within its competence in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

In that connection, the delegation of Azerbaijan will vote in favour of the inclusion of the item in question on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Mr. Mamdouhi (Islamic Republic of Iran): As this is the first time I take the floor at this session, let me join others in congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the Office of the President of General Assembly. I look forward to you bringing Ecuadorian wisdom to our debates. My delegation would like to assure you of its full support and wish you every success as you take on the task of presiding over our deliberations.

I take the floor to explain our position on the General Committee's recommendation that the General Assembly include on its agenda for the current session the item entitled "Situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine". We are of the view that, at this session of the General Assembly, debating on multifaceted issues of a highly political, controversial nature will have little — if any — utility in furthering efforts to achieve workable solutions to an issue that has already been agreed upon in the Minsk agreements of 2015, which were endorsed in Security Council resolution 2202 (2015).

While there is an agreed international mechanism in place that is supported by the Security Council, inserting this dispute into the agenda of General Assembly might just bring out existing differences and sow division among Member States, rather than bridging them. It could even undermine the internationally recognized, agreed framework for a settlement in Ukraine. We need to afford more time to the already agreed mechanism and wisely refrain from taking hasty decisions.

Iran's principled position is to support a peaceful resolution to the Ukrainian and Russian dispute, and we firmly believe that the issue is primarily related to the two States concerned. A solution reached outside of that framework will not work unless it is endorsed by both States. This prestigious, representative organ should not prematurely engage in a debate on an item that has been on the agenda of the Security Council.

The Islamic Republic of Iran does not support the inclusion of a supplementary item entitled "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine" on the agenda of the current session. We think that it carries adverse implications for the internationally agreed modality and format of reaching a settlement of the dispute — the Minsk agreements — as endorsed by Security Council resolution 2202 (2015).

Mr. Simonoff (United States of America): The United States fully supports the addition of the agenda item entitled "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine". The position of the United States on Ukraine is consistent and clear. We condemn Russia's ongoing occupation of Crimea and call on Russia to release the approximately 70 Ukrainian political prisoners it holds, including Oleg Sentsov, who remains on hunger strike and whose health is deteriorating. We also condemn Russia's ongoing aggression in eastern Ukraine. Russia exerts direct control over anti-Government forces in eastern Ukraine and has introduced thousands of pieces of heavy military equipment into the conflict zone. We remain committed to the resolution of the conflict and call on Russia to fully implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements, including through the withdrawal of all foreign-armed formations from the territory of Ukraine. We urge all Member States to vote in favour of adding the item to the General Assembly's agenda.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I join others in congratulating you, Madam President, on taking up office.

The United Kingdom resolutely supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders. We reiterate that we do not recognize and continue to condemn the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea and its control of the peninsula, which remains unlawful. The United Kingdom calls for full compliance with international

human rights standards on the Crimean peninsula. All allegations and cases alleging human rights violations and abuses, such as enforced disappearances, torture and killings, should be thoroughly investigated. International human rights observers must be granted unhindered access to the whole territory of Ukraine, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions.

It is unacceptable that thousands of Crimeans remain outside of the monitoring mechanisms of the United Nations. Resolution 72/190, of 19 December 2017, should be fully implemented without further delay. The United Kingdom reaffirms its full support for the Normandy format, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Trilateral Contact Group, which are working towards a sustainable and peaceful resolution of the conflict through the full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all sides.

The situation in Ukraine is of international concern, so it is right that it should be on the agenda of the General Assembly, a view that the General Committee has overwhelming supported. It is for all those reasons that the United Kingdom will vote in favour of the Ukrainian proposal to include the item on the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly and urges all others to do so.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the recommendation contained in paragraph 96 of the report contained in document A/73/250.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour

Albania, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

Against

Armenia, Belarus, Burundi, Cuba, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Philippines, Russian Federation, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

Abstaining

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, India, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Malaysia, Mongolia, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam, Yemen.

The recommendation contained in paragraph 96 of the report contained in document A/73/250 was adopted by 68 votes to 13, with 48 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote against.]

The President: I shall now give the floor to those members who wish to make statements following the voting. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Bogyay (Hungary): First of all, Hungary would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your election and is committed to supporting your work.

I wish to start by emphasizing that Hungary has always supported the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, and I would like to reinforce that message today. However, allow me to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the alarming plight of national minorities in Ukraine. Ukraine has adopted an education law that is contrary to the very values of the European Union (EU) and NATO, which Ukraine wishes to join. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the violation of acquired minority rights and call on Ukraine to respect and protect the rights of national minorities. Ukraine has committed to complying with those norms in the

final declaration of the EU-Ukraine summit on 9 July. We expect the country to live up to its commitments.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): Let me join others in congratulating you, Madam President, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and to assure you of my delegation's full support in the Assembly's work and deliberations.

We have asked for the floor to explain why we voted against the recommendation contained in paragraph 96 of the report contained in document A/73/250. We are of the view that an enduring solution to the situation in conflict-affected areas of Ukraine can be achieved between the parties concerned through negotiations within the established formats and the implementation of mutually agreed arrangements. Armenia remains convinced that there is no alternative to an exclusively peaceful settlement. Our delegation would therefore like to highlight the importance of making every effort to avoid the diversion of processes and of taking consistent measures that are conducive to conflict resolution.

Mr. Situmorang (Indonesia): In principle, we strongly believe that any proposal for the inclusion of an additional agenda item should always be considered on the basis of comprehensive consideration and conducted through an inclusive dialogue among States Members of the United Nations.

My delegation considers that there is a need to continue discussing and clarifying the direction of this new additional agenda item to be included on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. Such clarification will be important in order to ensure that this additional agenda item will create an atmosphere conducive to further positive dialogue among the parties concerned with a view to finding a durable solution to the situation in Ukraine, as reflected elsewhere in resolution 68/262.

My delegation would like to reiterate Indonesia's firm commitment to the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as mandated by our Constitution. Our full support for the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, as clearly stated in resolution 68/262, is a clear application of this mandate.

In conclusion, as the United Nations has so many agenda items for deliberation in the General Assembly, we caution against the proliferation of additional agenda items without careful consultation with the entire membership. Based on all of those considerations, we voted in favour.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at the current session. We assure you of our full support throughout your work.

We must say that the two States concerned — Russia and Ukraine — are both States friendly to the Sudan, with close and even historical links to it. It may be important to mention that, over the past five years, we have maintained permanent diplomatic contacts with Kyiv for the first time — a relationship that is constantly developing.

We voted against the proposal because there are still other possibilities that have not yet been fully explored in the quest for a political solution to the disagreement between the two States.

We wish to recall the Minsk agreements, the application of which the General Assembly should encourage and even increase pressure to that end, so as to ensure the normalization of positive relations between those two neighbouring States. The polarization we have witnessed today can only prevent the General Assembly from fulfilling its obligations under its mandate, pursuant to paragraph 33 of the rules of the Assembly.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): We join others in congratulating you, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

We listened carefully to the arguments presented — including in the General Committee — on the request for the inclusion of the additional agenda item entitled "Situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine" on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We note that this recommendation of the General Committee did not enjoy consensus. Regrettably, there appears to be an emerging trend for the General Committee to make decisions through a vote. That dynamic has also affected the recommendations of the General Committee when presented to the General Assembly.

Prior to the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, we note that the General Committee adopted decisions mostly by consensus. That practice served us

well. We regret that consensus proved elusive on this particular agenda item and express our hope that the General Committee under your leadership, Madam President, will be able to renew efforts to forge consensus even on difficult issues.

Singapore abstained in the voting concerning the inclusion of this agenda item as set out in document A/73/193. While we respect the right of delegations to request the inclusion of agenda items, there are existing platforms, committees and agenda items in the United Nations for discussion, and even action, on the issues highlighted in document A/73/193.

Finally, we would like to place on record that our vote today on the inclusion of this agenda item does not in any way derogate or alter our position on resolution 68/262, entitled "Territorial integrity of Ukraine". We categorically oppose the annexation of any country or territory, as that contravenes international law. We reaffirm the principles of respect for the territorial integrity of, and non-interference in the domestic affairs of, a sovereign nation and respect for sovereignty and the rule of law.

Mr. Oña Garcés (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, like other delegations, we wish to congratulate you, Madam, upon your assumption of the Office of President of the General Assembly. We would like to take this opportunity to wish you the very best in carrying out your important work and assure you of our full support throughout the session.

Traditionally, Ecuador has maintained its position that the General Assembly should welcome the discussion of any matter, regardless of whether we agree with its substance or whether it divides opinion, without prejudice to the analysis we make at the time regarding the fundamental issues to be considered in each venue.

The General Assembly is the highest multilateral forum in which Member States can consider and discuss international problems in a constructive transparent fashion. It is precisely for that reason that Ecuador voted for the inclusion of this topic on the agenda of the General Assembly at this session.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

We will now turn to paragraph 97 of the report, in connection with item 90 of the draft agenda, entitled "Request for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the consequences of legal obligations of States under different sources of international law with respect to immunities of Heads of State and Government and other senior officials". The General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading F, "Promotion of justice and international law".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 98, in connection with item 91 of the draft agenda, entitled "Protection of persons in the event of disasters", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading F.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 99, in connection with item 92 of the draft agenda, entitled "Strengthening and promoting the international treaty framework", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading F.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 100, in connection with item 93 of the draft agenda, entitled "Safeguarding ocean space for present and future generations", the General Committee was informed that the delegation of Malta had requested that the proposal for the inclusion of the item be deferred to a future session of the General Assembly and that no action was required by the General Committee during the current session. The item therefore no longer appears under heading F.

In paragraph 101, in connection with sub-item (c) of item 101 of the draft agenda, entitled "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading G, "Disarmament".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 102, in connection with sub-item (mm) of item 103 of the draft agenda, entitled "Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World", and sub-item (oo) of item 103 of the draft agenda, entitled "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons", the General Committee decided to recommend their inclusion under heading G.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 103, in connection with sub-item (y) of agenda item 130 of the draft agenda, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)", and sub-item (z) of item 130 of the draft agenda, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea", the General Committee decided to recommend their inclusion under heading I, "Organizational, administrative and other matters".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 104, in connection with agenda item 135 of the draft agenda, entitled "Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 105, in connection with agenda item 170 of the draft agenda, entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity", the General Committee decided, by a recorded vote, to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

Before proceeding further, I should like to draw the attention of members to rule 23 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "Debate on the inclusion of an item in the agenda, when that item has been recommended for inclusion by the General Committee, shall be limited to three speakers in favour of, and three against, the inclusion. The President may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule."

Mr. Musikhin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The position of the Russian Federation on the concept of the responsibility to protect is well known. We will not repeat it now. But, before we proceed to a vote on this issue, we think it essential to take a brief look at history.

We recall that the member countries of the group promoting the concept initiated this very item last year. It is on record that those countries assured all delegations that, in the words of the Australian representative,

> "the proposal before the Assembly concerns a debate in the seventy-second session only." (*A/72/PV.2, p. 6*).

Other participants in that same group are now putting forward that controversial initiative once again.

I wish to recall that, before the proposal on the responsibility to protect emerged, the General Committee had endeavoured to work on the basis of consensus when agreeing on the agenda of the General Assembly. That is extremely important in order to ensure the effectiveness of its work. Without unity, we cannot achieve the desired result.

Two days ago, on 19 September, when considering the proposal on adding the item on the responsibility to protect in the General Committee, the group of countries that advocated that concept forced a vote using the delegation of Ukraine. In doing so they undermined the consensus foundation of the work of the Committee and, consequently, its authority. This is evidence that the advocates of that concept are not simply making promises that no one will actually keep, they are also instrumentalizing a situation designed to confuse other delegations. Furthermore, they have taken a course to break the practice of the work of the Committee, which has stood for many years. We believe that such a strategy by the advocates of the concept of the responsibility to protect will lead us into an impasse. Tactical manipulation undermines trust and damages the concept itself, which has already been deprived of its consensus basis, which had been constructed in such painstaking fashion since 2005. We should mention that the responsibility to protect was never a standard or a rule, but at least earlier there was an understanding

with regard to its consensual foundations. Now we do not even have that.

In June there was a discussion in the General Assembly on the essence of this issue, but it did not provide any added value. The situation can be corrected only by returning to the format of informal interactive dialogue in order to turn once again to a painstaking search for common approaches to the concept. We think that such a format would be sufficient and appropriate, and we see no reason for reviewing or duplicating it.

For a number of years, a range of delegations have mentioned the serious flaws in the concept and the lamentable consequences of its application. Nonetheless, the analysis of those shortcomings in the outcome of the debate in June has not taken place. There is no reason to hope that the latest formalization of the discussion in the General Assembly will somehow change those approaches.

In the light of what I have just presented, our delegation asks that we proceed to a vote and will vote against the inclusion of the item on the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We ask other delegations to do the same.

Mr. Al Arsan (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to express its concerns regarding this attempt by some delegations to have this item, which has become known as the responsibility to protect, included in the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. The countries that submitted that request still insist, in a selective and non-transparent manner, on ignoring the real and deep differences among Member States regarding the interpretation of the concept of the responsibility to protect, in particular its third pillar. Everyone in this Hall, including the Secretariat, is aware of the fact that we still have not established real standards and limitations that prevent the abuse of this concept by the Governments of certain Member States.

We are not delivering today a political statement, or giving lessons to anyone. Rather, we are talking clearly about disastrous consequences and about war crimes committed by the Governments of certain States, as a result of their distortions of the principles of international law and their misuse of the concept of the responsibility to protect unilaterally and without an international mandate. Those Governments have repeatedly committed acts of military aggression against certain countries and occupied territories and have infringed on their sovereignty and independence, as well as interfered in their internal affairs under the pretext of applying the concept of the responsibility to protect.

We will not despair, and we will continue to recall in the Assembly that the former Secretary-General openly mentioned, in one of his reports regarding the responsibility to protect, the genuine concerns related to the abuse by certain Governments of the responsibility to protect in Libya. I recall that Libya had experienced no terrorism from Al-Qaida or Da'esh before the Western military aggression against it. Its citizens were not drowning by the hundreds in the Mediterranean Sea, seeking to escape a war waged against them under the pretext of providing them with protection.

None of the Member States can deny that it is the ultimate responsibility of States to protect their citizens and strengthen early-warning systems to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. However, today we are facing a political and moral crisis that has worsened in recent years. Certain Governments are usurping noble and humane objectives to justify military aggression, occupation and interference in the affairs of other States. Those Governments preach openly at the rostrums of the United Nations that national sovereignty does not prevent them from exercising all kinds of intervention in the affairs of other States, including military intervention, under the pretext of protecting civilians.

We wish to recall that those Governments themselves were for decades responsible for the inability of the United Nations to assume its responsibilities to protect the Palestinian people and the Syrian people in the occupied Golan from Israeli occupation. Those Governments themselves are protecting the military aggression today against the people of Yemen, who are enduring the worst disaster, as mentioned by Under-Secretary-General Lowcock. Those Governments themselves hinder the implementation of relevant Security Council counter-terrorism resolutions in my country, Syria. The issue for those Governments has nothing to do with the responsibility to protect or the need to protect civilians, rather, the issue has everything to do with double standards and political hypocrisy intended to protect specific and narrow interests.

From the legal point of view, we underscore once again that the Outcome Document adopted by the Heads

of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit does not constitute a legal basis for the concept of the responsibility to protect to be considered an established and accepted principle. My country, along with many Member States, believes that paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome did not adopt the responsibility to protect as a principle. Rather, they asserted basic and genuine principles of the Charter of the United Nations relating to the commitment of all Member States to maintain international peace and security, protect succeeding generations from the scourge of war, have faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity of the human person, promote social progress on an equal footing and better standards of life in larger freedom, and, above all, respect the sovereignty of States and non-intervention in their domestic affairs. We therefore view those States that have requested the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its current session as responsible for deepening the dispute and causing divisions among Members of this international Organization.

In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic underlines the need to continue discussing this issue as part of informal dialogue sessions. We also reject the idea to include it in the agenda of the Assembly or to include any supplementary item related to it until we have achieved consensus on the concept of the responsibility to protect, its content and limitations. That concept must not be used for political ends that go against the purposes and principles of the United Nations and its Charter.

We call on our colleagues to vote against the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We call on them to support continued discussion of this topic in informal interactive dialogue sessions. Together we all bear a historic, legal and moral responsibility to establish genuine and balanced standards that ensure the application of the Charter with no double standards, selectivity or politicization.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The principle of non-interference is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as we all know, and has been reaffirmed in many documents that prohibit interference in the affairs of States, including early General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 2131 (XX), of 1965, entitled "Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of Their Independence and Sovereignty". Therefore, we do not agree with the approach used in selectively citing resolution 60/1, of 2005 while ignoring the Charter and other resolutions and declarations.

It is important for States and the international community to join forces in order to address the root causes of domestic conflicts and internal disputes in particular. The required engagement, or the good engagement, if we can call it that, means providing support in order to meet the needs and address political shortcomings encountered, such as providing help to establish democracy, promote capacity-building and strengthen confidence among the various communities and groups, as well as addressing economic deprivation and lack of economic opportunities.

Over the past three decades, the urgent need to combat the causes of environmental degradation, which is a direct driver of domestic conflicts, has become clear. That degredation poses a real threat to Earth that transcends international peace and security, and becomes a threat to the very survival of humankind on our planet. To address that situation, it is important to provide development assistance and cooperation so as to address inequality in the distribution of resources and opportunities; stimulate economic growth and economic opportunities; improve the terms of trade; give more opportunities to the economies of developing countries to enter export markets; promote the needed structural economic reform; and provide technical assistance in order to strengthen organizational institutions.

We recall that the Charter of the United Nations enshrined the responsibility of each Member State to safeguard international peace and security. When it comes to conflict, Chapters VI and VII of the Charter explain in detail the various ways of upholding international peace and security. Even if peaceful efforts towards reconciliation fail, the Security Council must shoulder its responsibility under Chapter VII of the Charter. Hence, the concept of the responsibility to protect overlaps with the clear provisions of Chapter VII. We all see that the concept of the responsibility to protect is rather a response to a temporary geopolitical situation and changes in accordance with differing circumstances.

One aspect that is permanent and does not change is the principle of collective security, even though it is at times affected by political considerations, but it enjoys greater stability and sustainability with

respect to international peace. It cannot, however, be replaced by the concept of the responsibility to protect. Unfortunately, as we mentioned yesterday in the General Committee, this concept depends on the feasibility of protection. It completely excludes international conflicts and confines itself to domestic ones, which are generally prevalent in Africa, and particularly in developing countries.

Unfortunately, I find myself forced to say that the responsibility to protect is a concept that, in the best of cases, is an opportunistic one. For our country and others in similar situations, this concept represents a threat to our territorial integrity. It encourages using weapons and committing violations. For those reasons, the Sudan will vote against the inclusion of this item. We call on other delegations to do likewise for all the reasons I have just explained.

Mr. Petersen (Denmark): This morning, in this solemn and honourable setting, we commemorated the late Kofi Annan and paid tribute to his service to the international community. In a way, therefore, it seems fitting that the General Assembly should meet this afternoon to adopt, I hope, the inclusion on its agenda of the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Few world leaders have been as dedicated to the prevention of those horrible crimes as Mr. Annan. He personally urged Member States to find common ground in upholding the principles of the Charter and standing up for the protection of civilians. Among the answers to his calls were the consensus adoption by all Member States of the 2005 World Summit Outcome under his stewardship as Secretary-General.

The request made by Afghanistan, Guatemala, Japan, the Netherlands, Romania, Rwanda, Ukraine, Uruguay and my own country, Denmark, to include this item on the agenda of the General Assembly at this session is based on two main arguments: first, to support the principle of respect for the responsibility to protect as agreed by consensus in 2005, and the importance of preventing the most serious crimes against humanity. The request makes specific reference to the consensus 2005 World Summit Outcome as the fundamental basis for the debate. In 2005, in that document, all Member States stressed

> "the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of the responsibility to protect" (*resolution 60/1, para. 139*).

Secondly, in what we view as a very successful debate on this topic during the session that has just come to a close, 79 Member States from all regions made statements on behalf of 113 countries providing an overview of the range of actions, initiatives and steps that Member States have taken to prevent the most serious crimes. It was clear from that debate that Member States are willing and eager to debate openly and honestly, to share their experiences and challenges, to voice criticism and to ask questions. The great diversity of interventions confirmed the value of holding a formal debate.

During those debates, a significant number of Member States from all regions called for the inclusion of the responsibility to protect as a standing item on the formal agenda of the General Assembly. Not all Member States agreed, and we have listened carefully to the arguments of those opposing this agenda item. We also met with delegations ahead of this meeting to seek consensus on a way forward. We respect the arguments and those who make them. We believe that the arguments should be properly discussed, but wonder why we should not do that openly, transparently, on the record, with interpretation here in the General Assembly Hall. We note that there exist many agenda items where there is no consensus on the substance of the item, but lack of consensus on the substance does not prevent the General Assembly from debating them.

The request from the nine co-signatories to have an open and formal debate about the responsibility to protect is also in line with the recommendations of the Secretary-General, who has stated that the principle is a key component of his prevention agenda.

The sole intention of this request is to foster debate on this important agenda item, preferably on the basis of a report by the Secretary-General, and it is the intention, should the Assembly decide to follow the recommendation of the General Committee, to use the debate to build bridges, not to increase the divide, between Member States on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We therefore encourage Member States to vote in favour of the proposal to include the responsibility to protect

on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Mr. Dotta (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Madam President, on your election to serve as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We have full confidence that, with your great skill, you will achieve great things in this difficult task, and, therefore, you have our full support.

Uruguay was one of the nine States that requested the inclusion of the item entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" as a supplementary item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. My delegation deeply regrets that the defence of civilian populations does not have the same priority or high priority for some Member States. Uruguay firmly supports the Secretary-General's prevention strategy and, linked to that, understands that it is precisely prevention, an aspect of the responsibility to protect, to which my country assigns priority. Faced with an international context in which the threat of extremely serious crimes looms over millions of innocent human beings in an alarming manner, the General Assembly has an unavoidable obligation to address the concept by actively and transparently debating the mechanisms that will make it possible to prevent such atrocities from being repeated.

It should also be borne in mind that a significant number of States have been advocating the inclusion of this issue on the agenda of the General Assembly. In that regard, Uruguay traditionally considers, as a matter of principle, that any item suggested by any Member State should be considered and debated by the entire membership. My delegation agrees with what was stated in the latest report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/72/884), namely, that the General Assembly continues to be the most comprehensive and inclusive forum for implementing the concept of the responsibility to protect, particularly with regard to recommending preventive measures for Member States when necessary, and that we should continue to reflect on lessons learned, avoid mistakes, set priorities and provide guidance so as not to commit mistakes in the future. We therefore encourage Member States to vote in favour of including this item in the agenda of the General Assembly at its current session.

Uruguay calls on all of us to work in good faith on this concept, inspired by the absolute conviction that it is imperative to continue working with determination in the search for a common understanding that has as its ultimate goal the defence of the right to life and human dignity.

Ms. Pellegrom (Netherlands): Let me first join others in congratulating you, Madam President, on your election, and we assure you of our full support for your work in the coming year.

Together with Afghanistan, Denmark, Guatemala, Japan, Romania, Rwanda, Ukraine and Uruguay, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has requested the inclusion of a supplementary item on the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the General Assembly at its current session. During the previous session, the General Assembly held its first formal debate on the responsibility to protect since 2009. The very large number of Member States that actively participated in that debate not only illustrated their readiness to formally discuss the matter, but also helped us to build common ground. Furthermore, the debate gave us a better understanding of the differences of opinion on the scope and implementation of the concept of the responsibility to protect.

We think the most appropriate and efficient way to address those differences is in a continued open and formal dialogue. The Kingdom of the Netherlands therefore calls on all Member States present today to support the inclusion of the item on the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the General Assembly, in conformity with the recommendation of the General Committee.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider the question of the inclusion of the item in the agenda of General Assembly at its current session.

Before giving the floor to those members wishing to speak in explanation of vote before the voting, I would like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kickert (Austria): I promise you, Madam President, that I will not use my full 10 minutes. In all brevity, since it is late on a Friday afternoon, and we have an important and strenuous week ahead of us, I would just like to underline that the European Union (EU) and its member States support including the

responsibility to protect on the formal agenda of the General Assembly as part of the effort to combat the alarming trend of an increasing number of deliberate attacks against civilians. We have to close the gap between rhetoric and action. We have to better harness the preventive potential of the responsibility to protect.

The debate we held in June 2018 and July (see A/72/PV.99, A/72/PV.100 and A/72/PV.105) was an opportunity to formalize our dialogue in the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect and to enable all sides to express their views. There is much that we all agree on, and it is only by deliberating and discussing that we can move to take appropriate action. For that reason, the member States of the EU will vote in favour of including the item on the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the General Assembly, as recommended by the General Committee, and we ask fellow Member States to do the same.

Ms. Argüello González (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Madam President, we would once again like to extend a warm welcome to you as you assume the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

We reiterate that it is still necessary to have further dialogue and consultation among Member States and the international community on the so-called responsibility to protect. We do not, therefore, agree that it should in fact be adopted and included on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Nicaragua continues to stand firm with the international community and the United Nations against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. At the same time, we insist that the persistent danger posed by the responsibility to protect is that it could be manipulated by disguised interventionists who could try in various ways to justify interference and the use of force to destabilize and change legitimate Governments.

In conclusion, the delegation of Nicaragua will vote against the inclusion of this concept on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, and we urge other delegations to do the same.

Mr. Méndez Graterol (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like the delegations that have preceded us and have spoken on our behalf, we would like to extend our congratulations to see you, Madam President, presiding over the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We wish you every success in the important responsibilities entrusted to you. You can count on the purposeful collaboration of the Venezuelan delegation to that end.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will vote against the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session because it considers the inclusion of the item will continue to detract from the possibility of consensus among Member States regarding its definition and scope. In that context, we are concerned that, through the forced implementation of that idea, given the bias in views, the sovereignty of States, as the guiding principle of international relations, will be weakened. We reiterate that this ambiguity can lead to confused or biased interpretations, which are part of double-standard policies, to the detriment of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The reservations that the so-called responsibility to protect presents, as does its inclusion on the agenda of the General Assembly at its current session, are supported by the traumatic experiences of military aggression that have taken place in the past two decades against peoples and countries in order to promote the overthrowing of Governments because of alleged violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Those armed interventions, which are obviously illegal, have led to destabilization and the institutional dismantling of States, while causing further suffering among the civilians that they were supposed to protect.

We want to reiterate that Venezuela is firmly committed to the need to prevent crimes against humanity, wars, genocide and ethnic cleansing. We condemn any attempt to commit those serious crimes, and we have denounced them and fought against them. We have always been open to a broad and transparent discussion of that matter via informal dialogues aimed at building the necessary consensus, given the political and legal implications that accompany this matter. We believe that the prevention of the crimes covered by the Rome Statute must be based on the need to promote dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution, bearing in mind Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations.

For Venezuela, the responsibility to protect its citizens, including the promotion and respect of human rights, is a responsibility of the State, based on the full exercise of its sovereignty and political independence.

We are aware that that prerogative can in no way be used to commit crimes against humanity. Therefore, the concept of the responsibility to protect cannot be made equivalent to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the full observance of which is fundamental to maintaining international peace and security.

Lastly, in the light of what we have just mentioned, Venezuela will vote against the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Ms. Gerardia González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

The delegation of Cuba is also grateful for the possibility to take the floor to explain its vote.

We wish first to recall that the issue of the so-called responsibility to protect is of serious concern to many countries, especially small developing countries, because of a lack of consensus on and definition of several elements of that issue, which can easily be manipulated for political purposes. We emphasize that such manipulation and politicization are seen as the outcome of the discussions that have taken place in the United Nations on that topic.

Against that background, Cuba believes that it is not yet time for the General Assembly to have a frank and transparent dialogue on the responsibility to protect. The discussion of that issue will lead to further differences of opinion within the Organization, since there is no clarity as to its scope and implications. The serious differences of interpretation with regard to the so-called responsibility to protect persist, and they will neither ensure its universal recognition and acceptance nor will give legitimacy to the proposed actions for its implementation.

For Cuba, combating crimes against humanity, genocide, ethnic cleansing and war crimes is a noble and just cause. However, we cannot accept the selectivity and double standards that are being hidden under a humanitarian veil in order to have a further tool to facilitate interference in the internal affairs of a State, regime-change agendas and the subversion of other countries, which are, we repeat, mostly small developing countries.

For all those reasons, we will vote against the inclusion of that item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Mr. Moldogaziev (Kyrzgystan): As this is the first time I take the floor during the current session, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you, Madam President, on your election. I would like to assure you that the delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic will support the work of the general Assembly under your leadership to enhance and strengthen the important role of the United Nations.

The principle of the responsibility to protect is not universally recognized. It is not unambiguously supported by all State Members of the United Nations. It is a concept rather than an international norm or standard. In that respect, we underscore the fact that the violation of a State's sovereignty and interference in its internal affairs for humanitarian or other reasons without the consent of the Government concerned is unacceptable. For those reasons, the Kyrgyz Republic will vote against the inclusion of the principle of the responsibility to protect on the official agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

Mr. Nasimfar (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran will vote against the inclusion of the item on the responsibility to protect (R2P) in the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, not because we oppose the basic idea contained in the concept but because we wish to draw the attention of Member States to the serious risk of a biased interpretation and application of R2P. We would like to reaffirm Iran's unwavering commitment to the noble goal of the protection of civilians. Needless to say, every State should embrace that responsibility vis-à-vis its population. That by no means implies permission to use force against other States under any pretext, such as humanitarian or pre-emptive intervention.

Actually, the actions and inaction of the proponents of the responsibility to protect in the past have not been consistent with the alleged objectives and purposes of that initiative. In theory, it seems that the protection of populations should be at the centre of the responsibility to protect. However, we have witnessed that, in principle, the responsibility to protect is guided by the politicized interests of States, rather than human dignity and human rights, and has therefore been applied in a selective manner. Its selective application has put into

question its legitimacy and validity as a principle of international law.

On the other hand, the abuse of the responsibility to protect in the past, based on political grounds, has brought about disastrous results, and has therefore diminished that initiative to a tool at the service of certain Powers. As such, that abuse has increased doubts with regard to its future applicability and success. It is obvious that the inaction of the international community vis à-vis some humanitarian tragedies should not be attributed to the absence of a normative framework or a lack of implementation of the responsibility to protect. The horrible genocide in Rwanda serves as a clear example of such inaction by the Security Council owing to a lack of political will among some of its permanent members.

With that in mind, the question arises as to how some responsibility-to-protect proponents who recognize the responsibility to protect as a legal principle are going to fulfil their obligations with regard to the protection of populations, while simultaneously selling their arms, with the prior knowledge or experience that those arms will almost certainly eventually end up being used to target civilians and civilian objects and will ultimately lead to war crimes and crimes against humanity, killing innocent civilians. In recent years, tens of thousands of civilians have been victimized by those so-called "beautiful arms", either in their homes or during public ceremonies, such as funerals and weddings, and even in schools, school buses and hospitals. The conduct of the arms-exporting proponents of the responsibility to protect raises profound scepticism about their seriousness and honesty concerning the noble objective of the protection of civilians.

One thing is abundantly clear — favoured ones have always been granted impunity and their atrocities have always been overlooked, no matter how serious and grave they are. Particularly, it becomes a matter of grave concern when disastrous atrocities committed against civilians by a friendly country are covered up in a systematic manner in order to avoid attracting the attention of world public opinion. Sadly, the R2P proponents prefer to keep silent and avoid confronting the world's worst humanitarian disasters so as to appease their allies.

Last year, the proponents of the inclusion of an item on R2P on the agenda of the seventy-second session, aware of the profound differences among Member States, told us in the Hall that the request would be a one-time opportunity. We are witnessing quite the opposite. Notwithstanding the formal discussion that took place in the General Assembly, we are still far from a consensual understanding of R2P implementation. A formal discussion in the General Assembly is not an appropriate format to address existing conceptual differences among Member States. We reiterate our call that, prior to the implementation of the R2P, it is crucial to define its normative contents, as well as its scope of applications, by holding informal interactive dialogue, as agreed in 2009.

Finally, the only way to restore R2P and its legitimacy is to abolish the selectivity in a way that genuinely addresses the plight of humankind whenever it faces atrocity crimes, in full conformity with the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations. Addressing the misery of people under foreign occupation is the most immediate litmus test for R2P.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): India, like other delegations, would like to warmly congratulate you, Madam, on your assumption of office as the President of the Assembly. We wish you success in fulfilling your important responsibilities.

Today, very early in the seventy-third session, we are faced with the need to decide by a vote on a recommendation that was subject to a vote in the General Committee. A vote in the General Committee, which is a rarity, is now becoming common. It represents a growing lack of consensus even on the issues to be discussed by the General Assembly. However, even by the standards of a lack of consensus, rare is the occasion when the same item is required to be voted upon both in the General Committee and in a plenary meeting of the General Assembly in two consecutive sessions. Unfortunately, that is the situation we are facing today in the case of the item that is now under discussion.

India was one of the delegations that last year voted in favour of the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the seventy-second session. We did so as we went by the assurance provided then that the intention was to have a one-off formal discussion to understand the broad positions of Member States on the responsibility to protect (R2P), as such a formal debate had not been undertaken for almost a decade. Following that outcome, as we are all aware, the General Assembly held three plenary meetings on 25 June and 2 July (see A/72/PV.99, A72/PV.100 and 72/PV.105) to hear 80 statements outlining positions during the debate. We

recall that many of those statements called for caution and stressed that the international community should define the understanding, applications, implementation and effects on States of both the international and internal dimensions of the concept of R2P.

That showed that there exists division among Member States on the further continuation of the discussion in that format. Now that we have had a formal discussion on the concept and have seen the existence of serious differences, as recently as the session that just concluded, an effort must be made to bridge the gaps in understanding the concept. Dialogue and discussion need not always be associated only with formal debates. Opportunities for convergence can perhaps also grow from informal and interactive consideration. Hence, trying to push through processes for formal consideration when there is no clear consensus may not be the best way forward.

In view of those reasons, my delegation is constrained to change our vote from supporting the inclusion of the item at the last session to abstaining in the voting on the item this time. We do so in the belief that we can continue our discussion on the concept of R2P in various formats in a spirit of collaborative diplomacy, rather than moving along on the basis of a formal process that is being contested repeatedly and does not provide scope for convergence.

Mr. Stefanile (Italy): Joining previous speakers, Madam, allow me first to congratulate you on your election. We assure you of our full support in your work in the coming year.

Italy strongly supports the General Committee's recommendation that the responsibility to protect be included on the formal agenda of the General Assembly. In our capacity of co-Chair, together with Qatar, of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect, our goal in keeping with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations is to foster dialogue through an exchange of views and experiences and to build consensus on what the United Nations and its States Members should do to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We are well aware of the different opinions and concerns within the membership, but discussing them is precisely the reason that we come together in the Assembly.

The founding of the Organization was inspired by the need to prevent the mass atrocities of the Second World War from recurring, with nations standing together against those crimes and initiating informal dialogue on how to prevent them in the future. That is why we believe that holding an open, transparent and inclusive debate in the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect will be a significant step forward in developing together preventive solutions, using existing early warning mechanisms and taking action when necessary.

The success of the 25 June and 2 July debate (see A/72/PV.99, A/72/PV.100 and A/72/PV.105) on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity proves the need for further discussion of the issue. The event saw a record list of speakers, who intervened for two days. Italy will therefore vote in favour of the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the General Assembly and calls on all Member States to do the same.

Mr. Almawda (Qatar): At the outset, I would like to join others in welcoming you, Madam, on your assumption of the presidency. I assure you of our full support.

The State of Qatar would like to express its full support for the General Committee recommendation for the inclusion of the responsibility to protect on the formal agenda of the seventy-third session.

The State of Qatar has been encouraged by the strong cross-regional support we have witnessed in favour of addressing ways in which Member States and the international community can further prevent mass atrocities, genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity by supporting and strengthening the United Nations early warning system. The responsibility to protect highlights the need to prevent these crimes from occurring and reflects the existing and shared responsibility of Member States to play a necessary role in prevention.

As the responsibility to protect also falls in line with the Secretary-General's recommendations, being a key accompaniment of his prevention agenda, we reiterate our full support oforthe General Committee recommendation. We call on all Member States to support the inclusion of that item on the formal agenda.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Ukraine strongly supports the recommendation of the General Committee to include the item on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic

cleansing and crimes against humanity on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly.

On many occasions in this Hall, my delegation has affirmed its commitment to the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, unanimously adopted by the General Assembly in that year. Furthermore, through the explicit endorsement of the provisions of the responsibility to protect in 2006, the Security Council underlined their significance.

This year's discussion of the responsibility to protect served as yet another affirmation of its importance for the international community, particularly in the light of the persistent and widening gap between the commitments and actions of some Member States. As a party to the core instruments of international law relating to the prevention of atrocity crimes, the protection of populations, the upholding of human rights and the elimination of all forms of discrimination, we believe that the inclusion of the item will serve as a platform for discussions among Member States on how to narrow gaps and build bridges between respective positions.

In that regard, my delegation had the honour to be a sponsor of the relevant request to the Secretary-General and will vote in favour of the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We encourage all Member States to do the same.

Mr. Lie Cheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its current session. China will firmly support your work.

With regard to the issue of the responsibility to protect, the 2005 World Summit Outcome document provides a clear description of the responsibility to protect concept. Its applicability is limited to only four atrocities, namely, genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and must be discussed on a case-by-case basis upon the authorization of the Security Council in strict accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. In view of the discussion during the previous session (see A/72/PV.99, A/72/PV.100 and A/72/PV.105), Member States still have significant differences on the interpretation and the implementation of that concept. We are concerned about the possible expanded use, or even abuse, of the concept. We therefore believe that national Governments should assume the primary responsibility to protect their citizens and that the principle of ownership by Member States must be followed. Member States can engage in an informal dialogue on the issue in order to overcome their differences.

In the light of that, China does not support forcing through any controversial initiatives, which will only undermine the fragile consensus among Member States. China opposes the inclusion of such an item on the agenda of the current session. During the previous two sessions of the General Assembly, we voted against the draft resolution. At the General Committee meeting on Wednesday, we also voted against its inclusion, and we will do the same today.

Mr. Stone (Australia): Last year, Ghana and Australia submitted a request to include the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. That was a response to a call for a General Assembly debate, including by States without standing concerns in relation to the responsibility to protect. Our goal was to foster dialogue and to help to build consensus. The proposal of Ghana and Australia concerned a debate at the seventy-second session.

During this year's General Assembly debate on the responsibility to protect (see A/72/PV.99, A/72/PV.100 and A/72/PV.105), there was an overwhelming recognition of the value of the ongoing dialogue within the General Assembly on the issue. We understand that there remain different views with regard to the responsibility to protect and its implementation. That is a reason to continue our dialogue. Australia supports the inclusion of the item on this year's agenda.

Mr. Ten-Pow (Guyana): Guyana will vote in favour of the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the seventy-third session because we believe that the General Assembly is the forum for Member States to debate issues of that nature on which there is no consensus and to seek solutions through dialogue.

We believe that the concept and practice of the responsibility to protect are important for the times in which we live. However, we recognize that there may be legitimate concerns about the possible misuse of the responsibility to protect, but we believe that that is all the more reason that it should be discussed, with a view to finding ways to curb any excesses or misuse to which it may give rise.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on the recommendation by the General Committee for the inclusion of item 170, entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity", in the agenda of the current session.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Yemen

Against:

Belarus, Burundi, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Gabon, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Abstaining:

Algeria, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam

The recommendation contained in paragraph 105 of the report contained in document A/73/250 was approved by 93 votes to 16, with 17 abstentions.

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): I take the floor to make an explanation of vote on the inclusion of the agenda item on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Singapore voted in favour of the inclusion of the agenda item. However, we would have preferred that this issue be resolved through a consensus decision. Unfortunately, consensus was not possible in this instance.

The reality is that there remain deep differences among Member States on the concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P), and we are aware that the issue continues to divide Member States. The voting in the General Committee a few days ago and in the General Assembly today indicates clearly that the divisions are deep. In such a context, it is important to build trust and confidence so as to nurture a dialogue and gradually build some common understanding. I recall that last year the proponents of this agenda item provided clear assurance that their request for inclusion of this item was one-off and that this item would be included in the agenda of the seventy-second session only. We were therefore surprised that this agenda item was introduced once again at the seventy-third session.

We are equally surprised by the fact that their request was pushed through the General Committee earlier this week with little or no discussion or consultation with the wider United Nations membership. That raises an important question — is the inclusion of this agenda item meant to foster dialogue and build consensus or is it intended to make a political point in the General Assembly?

Singapore has always attached importance to dialogue and discussion. Of course, the General Assembly is a forum for open-ended dialogue among all Member States, including on difficult issues such as R2P. We will not stand in the way of any dialogue on any issue. However, Singapore also strongly believes that it is important to nurture a dialogue on R2P

that is productive and constructive. In our view, an open debate is not always the best way to build trust and confidence. Sometimes an informal, interactive dialogue can be more helpful in allowing for a candid exchange of views.

It is therefore our hope that the proponents will avoid the temptation to turn this agenda item into an annual exercise of statements and political rhetoric. If this agenda item becomes an annual ritual, mechanical in fashion, to score political points, Singapore will be obliged to review its position carefully. It is our hope that this agenda item does not become an exercise to deepen divisions in the General Assembly.

Let me conclude with a final point. Any dialogue, formal or informal, must be based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Such dialogue must also be conducted on the basis of mutual respect and understanding, and with sensitivity to the differences of views among Member States. We should all be careful to avoid using a discussion on this agenda item to further deepen divisions and differences among Member States. If we are serious about a dialogue on this issue, it is important that we keep our word, that we build confidence and trust among one another and make an effort to understand each other's differences. In particular, we should avoid going in the direction of country-specific resolutions, as such an approach will not help to build confidence or to build consensus.

Ms. Elgarf (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We offer the support of the Arab Republic of Egypt for all of your work.

(*spoke in English*)

My delegation takes the floor in explanation of the vote after the voting. We regret that this issue — namely, to include an agenda item entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly — has come to such a conclusion. We note that the voting in and of itself dispels any misconceptions or illusions that there is consensus on the notion of the responsibility to protect (R2P) or on how to move forward in that regard.

We would like to affirm Egypt's steadfast and unwavering commitment to the noble goal of the protection of civilians. Disturbed by the increasing attacks on health-care workers and facilities, and growing impediments to the deliver of health care in a wide range of contemporary conflicts, Egypt, during its presidency of the Security Council in 2016, along with four other co-penholders, drafted and successfully adopted resolution 2286 (2016) on the protection of health care in armed conflict. The resolution sent a strong and clear message from the Council that attacks targeting hospitals and medical workers were unacceptable and would not be tolerated. It also urged States to ensure accountability against the perpetration of such crimes targeting health-care facilities or health-care personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties during armed conflict.

We nevertheless believe that the notion of R2P still contains a number of political and legal gaps that, if let unattended, would do more harm than good with regard to its universal acceptance. Such gaps need first to be addressed and a consensus must be reached on the conceptual framework of the notion before any further steps are taken to mainstream the notion of R2P across the United Nations system. Moving forward, we ask that no draft resolutions be brought forward following the Assembly's consideration of the item.

Mr. Oña Garcés (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): In 2005, Ecuador supported the adoption of resolution 60/1, unanimously endorsing the World Summit Outcome Document, which clearly defined the three pillars that should underpin the idea of the responsibility to protect (R2P). Since then, my country has been consistent in defending, at every occasion, its constitutional principles, which stipulate the need to ensure full respect for human rights and the obligation of States to do the same as essential elements of coexistence. We reiterate that, for Ecuador, the three pillars of R2P should follow a strict line of political subordination and chronological succession and sequence in consistently promoting the first and second pillars, in the understanding that the third pillar and the potential use of force must come into play only in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort, and can be implemented only in accordance with Chapters VI and VII of the Charter of the United Nations and the purposes and principles established therein.

For Ecuador, the responsibility to protect is a topic that cannot be taken lightly because, although its conceptual basis is humanitarian, it must be

implemented under premises that do not undermine the rights and sovereignty of States. As we pointed out in the plenary debate on R2P held in June (see A/72/PV.99 and A/72/PV.100), only the General Assembly has the legal capacity and authority to establish a consensual definition of the responsibility to protect and, in particular, to set the conceptual, institutional and political dimensions for carrying out its implementation. The responsibility to protect is therefore a concept that requires greater analysis among the States Members of the Organization.

Ecuador believes that the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly provides an opportunity to discuss it with greater political interest and commitment in a constructive and transparent manner. We must, however, avoid politicizing dialogue that will prevent us from ensuring the protection of civilians in all places where genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are being carried out. That is why Ecuador voted in favour of including the item on the agenda for this session of the Assembly.

Mr. Situmorang (Indonesia): Indonesia supports the inclusion of the agenda item due to its great concern about the increasing number of crises involving genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. We have also witnessed a growing number of refugees and displaced persons. The issue has been the subject of a long and heated debate, involving a striking difference of interpretation and expectations. We regret the fact that it has caused divisiveness in this body. We would prefer to discuss the issue that brings us all together, namely, the rubric of sustaining peace, focusing on conflict-prevention.

Based on that understanding, although we are not comfortable that the purpose of the agenda item is not in line with the initial agreement that the debate was meant to be a one-off, we are open to discussing the issue. Our position is clear — the obligation to protect civilians should be first and foremost the responsibility of the country concerned. The entire discussion should therefore be redirected towards strengthening the capacity of countries in fulfilling that mandate and not interfering in the sovereignty and territorial integrity of others. Helping the capability of a country to improve its early-warning system and conflict prevention will also assist the implementation of the sustaining peace concept that should be our priority in this body.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

We shall now proceed with the next part of the item on our agenda.

We will now turn to paragraph 106, in connection with item 176 of the draft agenda, entitled "Observer status for the New Development Bank in the General Assembly". The General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 107, in connection with item 177 of the draft agenda, entitled "Observer status for the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea in the General Assembly", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 108, in connection with item 178 of the draft agenda, entitled "Observer status for the European Public Law Organization in the General Assembly", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 109, in connection with item 179 of the draft agenda, entitled "Observer status for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in the General Assembly", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 110, in connection with item 180 of the draft agenda, entitled "Observer status for the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries in the General Assembly", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the agenda recommended by the General Committee in paragraph 111 of its report for adoption by the General Assembly, taking into account the decisions just adopted with respect to the draft agenda.

Bearing in mind that the agenda is organized under nine headings, we shall consider the inclusion of items under each heading as a whole. I should like to remind members once again that, at present, we are not discussing the substance of any item.

Items 1 and 2 have already been dealt with. We shall now turn to items 3 to 8. May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the inclusion of the items listed under heading A, "Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences".

May I take it that the items listed under heading A are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to heading B, "Maintenance of international peace and security". May I take it that the items listed under heading B are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Ms. Simonyan (Armenia): We have asked for the floor to put it on record that Armenia dissociates itself from the decision to include item 41 in the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. We kindly ask that Armenia's position be duly reflected in the official record of the meeting.

The President: We will proceed as requested.

Next we turn to heading C, "Development of Africa". May I take it that the item listed under this heading is included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Now we come to heading D, "Promotion of human rights". May I take it that the items listed under heading D are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Heading E is entitled "Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts". May I take it that the item listed under this heading is included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Next we turn to heading F, "Promotion of justice and international law". May I take it that the items listed under heading F are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to heading G, "Disarmament". May I take it that the items listed under this heading are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Heading H is entitled "Drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations". May I take it that the items listed under this heading are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Lastly, we turn to heading I, "Organizational, administrative and other matters". May I take it that the items listed under heading I are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to section IV of the report of the General Committee on the allocation of items.

The General Committee took note of the information contained in paragraphs 112 to 114. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of the information contained in paragraph 114 concerning the granting of observer status?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 116 to 119. We shall take up the recommendations paragraph by paragraph. However, before we proceed, may I remind members that the item numbers cited here refer to the

agenda in paragraph 111 of the report before us, namely, document A/73/250.

We shall now turn to paragraphs 116 (a) to (r), relating to a number of plenary items. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of all of the information that the General Committee wishes it to take note of and approve all of the recommendations of the General Committee contained in paragraphs 116 (a) to (r)?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraphs 117 (a) to (c), relating to sub-item (c) of item 99, "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space"; item 101, "General and complete disarmament"; sub-item (mm), "Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World"; and sub-item (oo), "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons" of item 101. May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendations contained in paragraphs 117 (a) to (c)?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to paragraphs 118 (a) and (b), relating to item 137, "Programme planning", and item 147, "Administration of justice at the United Nations". May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendations contained in paragraphs 118 (a) and (b)?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraphs 119 (a) to (g), relating to the Sixth Committee. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of all of the information that the General Committee wishes it to take note of and approve all of the recommendations of the General Committee contained in paragraphs 119 (a) to (g)?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to paragraph 120 of the report of the General Committee on the allocation of items to the plenary and to each Main Committee.

I first turn to the list of items recommended by the General Committee for consideration directly in plenary meeting under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items listed for plenary meetings?

It was so decided.

The President: We come next to the list of items that the General Committee has recommended for allocation to the First Committee under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the First Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of those items for consideration by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)?

It was so decided.

The President: We come now to the list of items that the General Committee has recommended for allocation to the Second Committee under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of those items for consideration by the Second Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Third Committee under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of those items for consideration by the Third Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we come to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Fifth Committee under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of those items for consideration by the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: Lastly, we come to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation

to the Sixth Committee under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of those items for consideration by the Sixth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of the first report of the General Committee. I wish to thank all the Members of the Assembly for their cooperation and for their patience this Friday afternoon.

I would now like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the Holy See, in its capacity as an observer State, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with resolution 58/314 of 1 July 2004, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/58/871, the Holy See, in its capacity as an observer State, will participate in the work of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

I would also like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the State of Palestine, in its capacity as an observer State, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with resolutions 3237 (XXIX), of 22 November 1974, 43/177, of 15 December 1988, 52/250, of 7 July 1998, and 67/19, of 29 November 2012, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/1002, the State of Palestine, in its capacity as an observer State, will participate in the work of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

In addition, I would like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with resolution 65/276, of 3 May 2011, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/65/856, representatives of the European Union will participate in the work of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.